

USDA-NRCS Minnesota Civil Rights Advisory Committee Minutes

August 20, 2008; 10:00am – 3:00pm

4th Quarter, FY2008

Waite Park Field Office, Room 217

Attendees: Cory Drummond, CRAC Chair, Area 5 Rep
John Anderson, Area 1 Rep
Steve Lutes, Area 2 Rep
Debra Hermel, Area 3 Rep
Brenda Tonn, Area 6 Rep
Christiane Roy, Area 7 Rep
Mike Walker, MLRA Office REP
Cutrina Moreland, State Office Rep
Ann English, State Office
John Xiong, State Office
Lenore Marken, Area 2
Bill Hunt, State Office

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Cory Drummond, Committee Chair at 10:00am.

Approval of May 15th, 2008 meeting minutes:

Motion: Cutrina Moreland, Second: Christiane Roy

Cory introduced John Xiong, the newest member of the committee representing the Asian Pacific Islander Emphasis Program

Reviewed term appointments. Those employees in their last year of CRAC membership are Steve Lutes, Cory Drummond, and Christiane Roy. New representatives from these areas will need to be appointed.

Reviewed bylaws (welcome packet). The roles and responsibilities of committee members were discussed. The committee is to come up with ideas and recommendations for the State Conservationist. We are the voice for field offices.

Budget

Reviewed budget to date for 2008. The majority of our budget goes to registration for employees to attend the cultural event days.

Cultural Events Report

Reports were given about each event that took place throughout the state. Drummond gave a report on the Hutterian Colony in Graceville and the Peder Engelstand Village in Thief River Falls. Tonn gave a report on the Forest History Center in Grand Rapids and on the State Orphanage in Owatonna. Walker gave a report on the Museum of Russian Art in Minneapolis.

All events were very well received. Surveys were conducted at each site and a summary report of these reviews will be reported. However, due to some scheduling conflicts and request problems this was the last year of the cultural events day. The committee will have to think of new ideas for ways to get cultural diversity out to employees. We should

still keep people informed of cultural events happening throughout the state but encourage employees to do these activities on their own time.

Web Site

Improvements to the web site were discussed. Xiong brought up that there were inconsistencies in titles of special emphasis programs. It was suggested that the names be listed just as they are listed in the general manual. Acronyms should also be spelled out. There is a link to the national civil rights page regarding required posters. Xiong suggested a link be set up for each of the SEPMs. The Outreach Coordinator is working on getting specific demographics for each county in Minnesota. He also suggested that we include a link for students that may be interested in NRCS employment. A link to human resources that shows pictures of employees doing specific tasks may be important for students to actually see what kind of work is being performed in the field.

230 File Assembly

The committee discussed the 230 filing system. Roy suggested we look at the MN CR guide as a whole and recommend specific changes that would address the current 2006 national guide. She suggested that bulletins and emails be kept electronically in a 230 folder so they don't always need to be printed off to reduce the amount of paper that goes into the 230 folder. Only the most important items should be kept in the actual 230 paper file, including the last 2 reviews, job descriptions, scheduled training, and demographics of the county and how we can apply that information to the county. Training may need to be offered on how to organize and manage outlook to save files and emails. Drummond distributed an example of a 230 file that we can use as a tool for demonstrating to the field office how to organize the 6-part folder. Committee members would like a copy of the stickers that were used in this 6-part folder.

Suggestions for Civil Rights Delivery

Roy suggested the civil rights DVD that is required for all employees to review be available to access through Aglearn or some other kind of shared drive.

Mr. Hunt discussed program updates, budgets, and staff diversity. He continues to work on getting previous suggestions addressed. These suggestions include developing a way through parity reports to account for the wife's role in NRCS projects and a way to resurvey the current workforce on a voluntary basis to identify impairments or disabilities with employees. He also suggested that members of the CRAC sit on vacancy panels through Human Resources to observe the process of selecting individuals for a vacancy panel. Mr. Hunt discussed how the changes in the 457 series have affected 9 people in the state. He encouraged the committee to think of ways to reach and include Hmong /Somali and other minority groups in program sign-ups. Mr. Hunt also discussed budget projections for 2009. We can expect a smaller budget than 2008. Because of this training will need to be developed locally.

SEPM

John Xiong indicated that a student will be looking for employment in Minnesota or Wisconsin in December.

Suggestions for Management

1. Ways to condense the 6-part folder to include a reference to electronic bulletins and emails. Perhaps develop a shared drive or organize outlook to reference these bulletins so they don't need to be printed off.
2. Have the civil rights DVD available through Aglearn or a shared drive
3. On the website, list colleges and curriculum that fit the NRCS course requirements.

Next Meeting: November 6th

Meeting Adjourn: Motion: Steve Lutes Second: John Anderson